

# **RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 27, 2004 MEETING**

**Board Members Present: Senator Daniel Connors (Chair), Robert Batting (Vice-Chair), RIDOT Director James Capaldi, Representative Brian Coogan, Thomas Deller and William Kennedy. Absent was Sharon Conard -Wells.**

**Also Present: Alfred J. Moscola (General Manager), Steven M. Richard (Outside General Counsel), Henry Kinch, Deborah Dawson, Maureen Neira, Mark Therrien, Roger Mencarini, Ellen Farrell and other members of RIPTA's senior staff and the public whose names are listed on the meeting sign-in sheet.**

**Prior to calling the meeting to order, Senator Connors thanked everyone for attending and asked each of the Board members to state their names. After all members introduced themselves, Senator Connors made several announcements as requested by Narragansett Electric and then proceeded to read into the record letters from US Senator Lincoln Chaffee, Lt. Governor Charles Fogarty, Representatives Paiva-Weed and Crowley.**

## **Agenda Item 1: Approval of Minutes of July 26, 2004 meeting**

**Senator Connors requested any comments regarding the minutes of the July 26, 2004 meeting. Hearing none, a motion was made for the approval of the minutes of the July 26, 2004 meeting by Mr. Deller, seconded by Mr. Kennedy. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.**

## **Agenda Item 2: General Manager's Report**

**Mr. Moscola stated that RIPTA continues to achieve strong operational efficiency in its performance goals. He reported that out of sixteen (16) operational goals for FY 04, fourteen (14) were above goal, one (1) was below and information was not available for one (1). He pointed out that the goals set are stringent.**

**He indicated that RIPTA has received \$546,245 from the Department of Elderly Affairs. He further stated that work continues with Jim Fleming for RIPTA ADA compliance regarding voice announcements. Mr. Moscola stated that he has been informed that RIPTA's compliance level of (75%) is the second highest in the country and we continue to work towards our goal of 100%.**

## **Agenda Item 3: Summary of Public Hearing Results on Service Reductions**

**Senator Connors introduced Mark Therrien, AGM of Transit Service Development and Planning to address this topic. Mr. Therrien presented a summary to the Board of the public hearings which is attached as Exhibit A.**

**Following Mr. Therrien's presentation, Senator Connors thanked RIPTA staff for their work in supporting the public hearings, and moved to the next agenda item.**

#### **Agenda Item 4: Public Comment Period**

**Senator Connors opened the floor to public comments and requested that comments be kept brief and non-repetitive.**

**Almas Kalafian – Ms. Kalafian is a resident of Warwick who currently uses the Ride Program and previously used RIPTA service. She stated that the need for ADA service has increased significantly over the past five years, and understands that providing the service is extremely complicated. She asked the Board to please consider the impact to the ADA population when considering service cuts.**

**Leo Canuel – Mr. Canuel represents the PARI Independent Living Center which services Rhode Island residents with disabilities. He indicated that 70% of Rhode Islanders with disabilities are unemployed, and 30% are underemployed which makes owning their own transportation unaffordable. He commended RIPTA on the job**

done, and stated that residents of the state need more service, not less.

**Kenneth Termell – Mr. Termell represents the Massachusetts Bay Transit System Users (MBTSU) and he indicated that many individuals from Massachusetts rely on RIPTA service. He indicated that his committee is willing to help RIPTA retain service however possible.**

**Russell Gifford - Gray Panthers – A representative from the Gray Panthers suggested that the State of Rhode Island offer it's employees RIPTA passes instead of free parking. He spoke of the benefits to air quality and asked the Board to vote against service cuts.**

**John Baxter – Mr. Baxter is the Director of Constituent Services for the senate and came to speak on behalf of Northwestern Rhode Island. He thanked RIPTA for the special meeting in Burrville and informed the Board that cuts in that area would significantly impact the quality of life for the patients of Zambarano hospital who already struggle to maintain their dignity.**

**Lorna Ricci – Ms. Ricci represents Ocean State Independent Living Center in Warwick. She pointed out that many Rhode Islanders with disabilities strongly rely upon RIPTA since they do not have the luxury of their own transportation, and that cuts would cause people**

who depend on RIPTA to lose their jobs. She pointed out that the elderly, disabled and underemployed would be most significantly affected and that to cut service would cut off many people's lifeline. She requested that the Governor and legislators seek more reliable funding for RIPTA.

**Jerry Bertrand** – Mr. Bertrand represents the RI Rural Development Council. He stated that they vehemently oppose cuts or changes to rural areas.

**Barbara Peters** – Ms. Peters represents AARP of RI. She stated that curtailed services will hurt the elderly, many of who rely on RIPTA as a lifeline. AARP sees the need to increase service, especially in light of the fact that the elderly population will increase dramatically by 2025.

**Angelina Texiera** – Ms. Texiera represents the National Federation for the Blind. She implored the Board not to cut services and offered assistance by the Federation.

**Senator Juan Pichardo** – Sen. Pichardo represents residents in the Elmwood area, and stated that he strongly opposes cuts to not only the Elmwood area, but to all of the state. He stated that many people rely on the bus service, and urged the Board and the Governor to step up and activate the Blue Ribbon Commission for more funding.

**Marjorie Rogers – Ms. Rogers pointed out that many people will be stranded who rely on RIPTA for weekend and holiday service. She asked the Board to please not cut the service.**

**Representative Eileen Naughton – Rep. Naughton represents the residents of Warwick. She indicated that she attended the public meetings in Warwick, and recognizes that many people depend on RIPTA to succeed and to have a happy life. She asked that the Governor and the General Assembly to meet current needs and do the right thing for those who depend on RIPTA.**

**Silvano Salurno– Mr.Saurno represents the Gray Panther organization and he suggested that the Board seek funding from the national level.**

**Anthony LoPresti – Mr. LoPresti stated that he currently has a drivers license and appreciates it, but recognizes that it is not long before he will have no option but to depend on RIPTA.**

**Roberta Merkle - Ms. Merkle represents Cornerstone Health Center and reiterated her comments from the Warwick Meeting.**

**Frederika D. Jay – A letter was read by Mark Therrien from Ms. Jay. Her letter indicated the wide range of activities in which she would be unable to participate without RIPTA service.**

**Colleen McCarthy – Ms. McCarthy represents the Sargeant**

**Rehabilitation Center. She made a statement on behalf of individuals with disabilities served by the Center.**

**Stephen Farrell – Mr. Farrell serves as President/Business Agent of the Amalgamated Transit Union, Division 618. He indicated that they protest the proposed cuts for many reasons, the least of which being loss of jobs. He indicated the reduced service would place undue pressure on drivers and riders. He read from the RIPEC report and urged the Board to take actions to move forward with the creation of the Blue Ribbon Commission for a source of dedicated funding for transit.**

**Senator Connors thanked everyone who spoke, and pointed out that not everyone on the RIPTA Board wanted to go to public hearing with cutting services. He further indicated that in light of all of the publicity, there is a lot of misinformation and outright lies being spread. He further indicated that the RIPEC report has surfaced and now the Board has heard from the public just what RIPTA means to them. He believes that the Governor has now gotten the message.**

**Before moving to the next agenda item, several members of the Board requested to address the audience.**

**Thomas Deller – Mr. Deller indicated that he made the motion to schedule the public hearings. He stated that the Board spends numerous volunteer hours trying to make the system work and that**

he takes no joy in considering cuts, but points out that it is impossible to give good service with the current funding situation. He stated that many changes have been made to save money, but the public hearings were necessary to make the funding crisis public. He pointed out that there are a number of uncontrollable items, such as diesel fuel and there is no place left to cut but service. He stressed the need for systemic changes, and cautioned that unless RIPTA gets help from the State, there will be no option but to cut.

**William Kennedy** – Mr. Kennedy stated that the state requires a balanced budget, and it is impossible to do so under the current circumstances. He stated he would not support service cuts, and would vote by his conscience. He stated that he recognizes that the lives of many will be affected, and cannot support cuts. On the other hand, he recognizes the need for a change in the way RIPTA is funded, since the gas tax is no longer adequate. He supported the work of RIPTA staff, and supported the need for a dedicated funding source for RIPTA.

**Robert Batting** – Mr. Batting indicated that he recognizes how fortunate he is. Mr. Batting stated that when RIPTA receives funds from the State, there is frequently a need for more. He distributed a document outlining RIPTA's growth over the past several years, and pointed out the increases to manpower and vehicles.

**Representative Brian Coogan** – Rep. Coogan stated his commitment



**to continue to support RIPTA's request for additional funding.**

**Director James Capaldi – Director Capaldi indicated that he is a major advocate for RIPTA, citing congestion and the lack of capacity of the existing roads. He stated that the State needs RIPTA. He reiterated the earlier comments by Mr. Deller and recognizes the need for more money to run RIPTA as well as the commitment to seek alternative ways to fund RIPTA.**

### **Agenda Item 5: FY 2005 Deficit Reduction Options**

**Mr. Deller moved to take under advisement the comments and suggestions received from public officials, civic leaders and passengers to continue the agenda item to a future regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors to be held in accordance with the Open Meetings Act and requested an analysis of the existing administrative budget. Such motion was seconded by Mr. Batting and passed unanimously.**

**Sen. Connors informed the public that the bus routes are safe for now and that work will continue to resolve the problem, and the public will remain informed.**

### **Agenda Item 6: FY 2004 Audit Results**

**Representatives from Chatellier, Fontaine and Wilkinson joined the**

meeting and addressed the Board with the results of the FY 2004 audit. Jim Prescott reviewed the information included in the packet, and provided the Board with an overview of the audit.

#### **Agenda Item 7: Review of JPB Agenda/RIPTA Representation at JPB Meeting**

Steve Richard, Outside General Counsel, indicated that there is no standing alternate from the Board to fill in at JPB meetings.

Mr. Batting suggested that Chairman Connors fill in at the upcoming JPB meeting, and Sen. Connors agreed to do so.

#### **Agenda Item 8: Adjournment**

Mr. Deller moved to adjourn the meeting, which Mr. Batting seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Ellen Farrell

Secretary to the Board

**EXHIBIT A**

**(Narrative)Purpose:** The purpose of this staff summary is to provide RIPTA’s Board of Directors with the public comments from the ten (10) public hearings that were held on September 3, September 7, September 8 and September 9, 2004 regarding the proposed service reductions that are part of RIPTA’s FY 2005 Budget Deficit Reduction Plan. This Deficit Reduction Plan calls for the Authority to address a \$1.9 million deficit within 6 months (January --June 2005) by cutting \$3.8 million in service and for the RIPTA Board to vote on service reductions at its September 27, 2004 meeting in order that any approved reductions be implemented on January 8, 2004.

**Background:** The RIPTA Board of Directors at its July 26, 2004 meeting directed the General Manager to proceed to public hearings to obtain public comment on the proposed service reductions as part of the Authority’s FY 2005 Deficit Reduction Plan. Two public hearings were held in each of the five affected counties for a total of ten hearings according to the following schedule: two in Narragansett on Friday, Sept. 3; two in Providence on Tuesday, Sept. 7; two in Warwick on Sept. 8; two in Barrington on Sept. 8; and two in Newport on Sept. 9, 2004.

<b>Coordination (Routing)</b>	<b>Initial</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Deputy General Manager</b>
<b>Action</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>Approved</b>	_____
_____ <b>Signature</b>			<b>Date</b>

**BUS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**  
**COS CHIEF OF STAFF**

**ENG ENGINEERING General Manager Action: U Approved U**

**Approved for submission to the Board \_\_\_\_\_Signature**

**Date**

**FIN FINANCE**

**HRMS HUMAN RESOURCES**

**ISVC INFORMATION SERVICES.**

**MAIN MAINTENANCE**

**MKT MARKETING Board Action (When Required):Approved by the  
Board of Directors on**

**Date**

**OPER OPERATIONS**

**PLAN PLANNING**

**PROC PROCUREMENT**

**RISK RISK MANAGEMENT**

**SAFE SAFETY**

**SPEC. TRAN SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION**

**TRAN TRANSPORTATION**

**Overview from the Public Hearings: The following provides a  
summary of comments made by the public during the public  
hearings. A more detailed summary of comments made by members  
of the public and elected officials who attended the public hearings is  
attached.**

**Public Hearing**

**Narragansett Town Hall**

**Friday, September 3, 2004**

**12 pm —2 pm**

**Twenty-nine (29) people, including three (3) public officials, attended the afternoon hearing. Eighteen (18) people offered oral comments and two (2) provided written comments. Elected officials present included Representative Matt McHugh, Representative Peter Lewiss and Representative John Patrick Shanley. Steve Farrell, Business Agent for Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) 618, attended.**

**A major theme was the lack of service in Bradford and other South County communities such as Hopkinton and Misquamicut and inadequate service in the Westerly area.**

**Representative Lewis, Abraham Verghese, Kathleen Rubinstein of the VNS home Health Services, and Jean Barry, representing the Basic Needs Network of Westerly and the W.A.R.M. Shelter, spoke about the need for more transit in the areas they represent. Rubenstein emphasized the need for more transportation to social services and health centers, adding that the needs of children with disabilities were being ignored. Barry submitted a petition requesting the expansion of Westerly Flex. Donald Gibson stated that South Kingstown is growing, so more service is needed especially at Fiddlesticks and Quonset Point.**

**Another major theme was the potential loss of Rte. 64 (Newport/URI)**

and its impact on commuting to jobs and for students to URI.

Representative Shanley expressed concern about the impact of cuts on students attending URI service and about cuts to ADA service in the Rte. 64 corridor. He feels service in Washington County is underutilized and suggested the process for amending budget needs be examined. Verghese stated he needs Rte 64 to commute to work from South Kingstown to Newport and his trip is crowded every day. Mary Willner identified herself as one of a large group that uses the #64 to travel from Jamestown to Newport. Ken Kemp said the #64 had a strong, regular ridership. Frank Heppner stated the loss of the #64 would present huge problems for the Kingston Train Station, which lacking bus service would no longer qualify as an intermodal hub, losing its ability to leverage federal funding. Steve Farrell suggested incorporating Rte. 64 into Rte. 66 (Providence/URI) and Mark Therrien said it would be considered.

Funding for transit was another key theme. Representative McHugh said he would look at tolls as a way to increase transit funding and Representative Lewiss noted that RIPEC mentions license and registration fees as transit funding sources. Regarding funding sources Peter Stelljes suggested bridge tolls. Jack McCabe stated Rhode Island can find the needed \$1.9 million.

Bob Votava said the State does not have a long-term funding program for transit because transit lacks a constituency, asking who lobbys

for RIPTA? He asked if RIPTA could save any money; Al Moscola replied that RIPTA saves money any way possible, citing the deferred rehab of 1999 buses and new farebox implementation as examples. Votova said transit service is not meant to be run like a business.

Anna Prager described a systemic funding problem with revenue not keeping pace with costs. She stated that RIPTA needs long-term, dedicated revenue like other transit agencies and called on legislators to find out what what's going on with the legislative committee that's supposed to study transit funding. Prager said it was up to the government to find funding to expand RIPTA..

Four people (Mary Willner, Abraham Verghese, Keith Marshall and Richard Evans) called for more marketing, including of Flex Service.

## **Public Hearing**

**Narragansett Town Hall**

**Friday, September 3, 2004**

**6 pm —8 pm**

Twenty-four (24) people, including two (2) public officials attended the evening hearing. Eleven (11) offered oral comments and three (3) provided written comments. Public officials attending included Councilman David Crook and Councilwoman Ann Marie Silveira.

**The potential loss of Rte. 64 for people who need to get to work, school, the doctor, etc. was again a major theme.**

**Councilman David Crook stated that seniors make up 30% of Narragansett's population and service cuts would negatively impact them and students. Sammy Deeb said the #64 Express to the Naval Warfare Center has consistent ridership of "33 "subscribers". He requested RIPTA make it a separate line and submitted a petition on behalf of thirty-six (36) users of the #64 Express, urging its preservation.**

**In written comment, Cynthia Jizmagian requested Rte. 64 be retained so people can get to work, conduct personal business, and travel to medical appointments; Rhandi Husted-Jensen requested Rte. 64 holiday service be preserved. Councilwoman Ann Marie Silveira asked if RIPTA could reduce the number of #64 trips; Al Moscola replied that reducing trip frequency reduces convenience and thus ridership.**

**John Holley said he uses # 64 every day to go to work and noted the elimination of 9 lines would affect tens of thousands of people. Evelyn Wheeler stated she would not be able to continue her volunteer work in Newport if the# 64 is eliminated. Leslie Mills, asked on behalf of her brother who is unable to drive to work if he could use Narragansett Flex to reach the URI Bay Campus; Mark Therrien answered that RIPTA would consider extending Flex to that campus.**



**Amelia Crook said she was concerned about the loss of service because many people in the area do not have cars.**

**Funding issues were also a major focus for comments.**

**Councilman David Crook said transit funding from the gas tax is a Catch-22 and the ultimate solution rests at the State House. David Winter suggested fare increases as a temporary solution; Mark Therrien responded that revenue decreased the last time RIPTA raised rates, but RIPTA would revisit fare zones versus single statewide rate.**

**Anna Prager said farebox recovery pays for only 30% at best of costs and the rest must come from state and federal sources; she urged everyone to call their legislators and reiterated the need for a long-range funding plan. Leslie Mills asked about a fuel surcharge; Al Moscola responded that RIPTA is not allowed to pass a surcharge on to its customers.**

**Also, with regard to funding and cutting costs Evelyn Wheeler asked the following: Can RIPTA use the ferry funding for the bus system? Can RIPTA cut back on slow trips and use smaller buses? Are employees who are not Local 618 members administrators? Is it possible to provide incentives to employers for transit use? What is the discount for senior riders? Mark Therrien responded respectively as follows: Federal CMAQ ferry money cannot be used for the bus**

system; RIPTA has cut back on some slow trips, but to cut back further would be to cut lifeline services; Small buses, used in some areas, are not feasible in all areas because they cannot hold peak trip passenger loads; RIPTA employs approximately 33 people in non-represented administrator positions; A new law providing employer incentives was passed in the last General Assembly session; RIPTA is reimbursed about 65 cents per ride for senior bus trips.

Errol Rowe asked if RIPTA could lock in diesel prices; Al Moscola replied that the Authority does not because it can waste a lot of money.

## **Public Hearing**

**Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce**

**Tuesday, September 7, 2004**

**12 pm – 2 pm**

One hundred and eighty-three (183) people, including three (3) public officials, attended two hearings in the afternoon. Forty-three (43) offered oral comments and twenty-one (21) made written comments. Elected officials attending included Senator Rhoda Perry, Senator Marc Cote and Representative Arthur Handy. Steve Farrell, Business Manager, and Tom Cute, Vice President of ATU 618 attended.

**A key theme expressed by the public at these two hearings was the hardship people with disabilities, seniors and other people who rely on RIPTA for job transportation and for ADA Ride service would suffer if service cuts were implemented.**

**Senator Marc Cote representing Linda Lafazia , a legally-blind Ride passenger, expressed concern about the potential loss of her service. Ms. Lafazia said losing Saturday service on Rte. 94 (Fairmount) would mean she could not do her weekly errands and would have to move. Almas Kalafian, who is visually impaired, stressed that losing fixed-route service would mean losing ADA service and also submitted a letter on behalf of her mother opposing the elimination of Saturday service on Rte. 3 (Warwick Avenue). Frederica Jay wrote that she opposed cuts because they would limit ADA service. Glen Valeff, who is legally blind and depends on RIPTA Routes 9 (Pascoag/Wallum Lake) and 52 (Branch Avenue), recommended cutting duplicate service. John Cavalho, an ADA Ride passenger and member of the National Federation for the Blind, expressed concerned about how he and others residing in his complex will get to doctors, meetings, etc. Harry Dunbar wrote that cutting fixed routes would have serious impacts on the ADA program.**

**The Executive Director of the DaVinci Center, John Deluca, requested that Rte. 52 be preserved as a lifeline for the area, impacting 17,000 people, supporting job development, and the transition from welfare**

to work. Elderly housing resident Barbara Palmigiano said she needs Rte. 52 to travel to the pharmacy, grocery store, church, etc. Goodwill Services Executive Director Lori Norris said 60% of Goodwill clients use Rte. 52 and another 10% use Rte. 9 to access job training and welfare services. Frances Pelletier said she would not be able to travel anywhere without Rte. 52 and uses it to reach doctors' offices and other locations. Virginia Maher and Robert Duggan wrote that they need Rte. 52 to get to work; Maher and Michael Holland said they need Rte. 9 to get to their jobs.

Carmen Rosario stated she needs to work weekends and holidays and no service at those times would make it hard for her to pay her bills. Diane Gilcreast said she works 6 days a week, is totally dependent on RIPTA, and needs night service on weekends to get to her job. Harvey Avinyard stated he needs the bus to get to work. Greg Garritt said he would have problems if service is cut at night and that service needs to run all the time since people work all days of the week and hours. Caroline Dorazio said low cost transit was needed in Providence because of parking costs in the city.

Noah Marsland said that if Rte. 76 (Central Avenue) is cut, the alternative was a two-mile walk, a problem for elderly and disabled people as well as students traveling to Tolman. Virginia Mulholland stated her opposition to eliminating Saturday service as a hardship for families who have only weekends for errands and shopping. Robert Bowers said RIPTA is his only transportation; Norman

**Bonenfant said loss of Rte. 29 (Kent County) would limit his ability to travel to doctor appointments.**

**Laura Wood, representing the International Institute, stated that cutting service, especially Rte. 20 (Elmwood), would mean that resident Somalian and Liberian refugees would no longer have service to the only jobs that are available to them in factories and in services. Nik Peros from the International Institute said more than 50% of new refugees live along Rte. 20 and that many of the refugees' entry-level jobs are second and third shift jobs.**

**Alison Rich stated support for Rte. 9, stressing people need it to reach Zamabarano Hospital, medical facilities, LaSalle and work. She said that RIPTA should not discriminate against northwest Rhode Island. Sal Lombardi of Scituate said that while running for public office he discovered that people in his area need transit to get to the doctors, visit relatives, etc. Ruby Mason, a Met School student in downtown Providence, said elimination of Rte. 9 would probably force her to drop out of high school. Thomas Fine said he supports continuation of #9. Renay McLeish said she rode the #9 daily and suggested part of it be eliminated. Nancy Hunt requested RIPTA change the #9 schedule to increase ridership and stated RIPTA needs to promote tourism from northern Rhode Island to Newport. Seventeen people submitted a petition to keep Rte. 10 (North Scituate). Several people held up signs indicating they needed bus service to reach the hospital and go to work. Anne Ackerman wrote**

**that she has no other transportation.**

**Ronald Barnett of Neighborhood Health Plans, which serves 73,000 RiteCare members, said that transit service reductions will negatively impact quality and cost of health care in Rhode Island.**

**Michael Poindexter, VP for Student Affairs at CCRI, said 87,000 CCRI students use RIPTA and access to RIPTA is an important student issue. Deana Waite spoke of her support for continued public transit access to all CCRI campuses.**

**With respect to the Providence LINK trolleys, few people spoke. Dan Petersen, Marriott General Manager, said the trolleys had a positive impact on the economy and tourism. George Corrente said Federal Hill trolley service is not a duplicate service; Steve Farrell stated it is not a complete duplication. John McCraffrey said the trolleys do duplicate other service. Joseph Thomas Folkes, an Urban League employee, said he supported trolley service on the South Side (Gold Line, Rte. 91). Mark Therrien noted that if the LINK is eliminated, RIPTA per a prior commitment would continue service on the South Side. Ann Ackerman said the Green Line (Rte. 92) trolley is needed in the area.**

**Representative Arthur Handy said cuts would cause more problems and it's the government's job to provide a viable alternative for people who need transportation. Steve Farrell recommended that**

cuts be based on need not productivity. Senator Rhoda Perry said transit is an asset the state cannot afford to lose and that we need to expand service. Richard Maisano stated the federal and state constitutions require RIPTA to provide transit service to all state areas. Senator Cote and Candace Cain Seil suggested condensing or trimming service instead of cutting entire routes.

Regarding funding, service costs and related topics several people offered comments.

Steve Kapalka asked if the legislature could use its \$1 million surplus and said cities and towns should provide funds. John McCaffrey recommended state government find additional funding. Tom Cute, 618 Vice-President, recommended establishing long-term funding for RIPTA. Brad Marston recommended a fuel surcharge for longer routes. Barry Schiller said the State should provide supplemental budget funding to solve the deficit. Board member Bill Kennedy stated that using the gas tax as RIPTA's funding source does not work. Richard Maisano asked how much of RIPTA's funding comes from the gas tax and suggested RIPTA reduce its workforce. Henry Kinch responded that the gas tax provides \$42 million.

Additionally. Elliot Shorter questioned why there are insufficient revenue streams, said the transit system is very good and recommended advertising routes. Barry Schiller recommended RIPTA improve marketing and other operations.

## **Public Hearing**

**Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce**

**Tuesday, September 7, 2004**

**6 pm – 8 pm**

**Ninety-three (93) people, including two (2) public officials attended the evening hearing. Thirty (30) offered oral comments and fifteen (15) provided written comment. Public officials attending included Representative Tom Slater and Senator Juan Pichardo.**

**As with the two afternoon sessions, the importance of job transportation and the hardship riders would suffer if service reductions were implemented was a major theme.**

**Representative Tom Slater said the RIPTA board should consider the effects of cuts on the Ride Program, small businesses, and students. Dorothy DeAngelis and Richard Ingram wrote to oppose cuts because of their impact on ADA service. DeAngelis said she relies on ADA service to get to her full-time job. Lisa Marotto stated her concern for people with disabilities and wrote that she depends on RIPTA to get to doctor appointments. Brian Marnane said he lives in a group home and is completely dependent on bus and trolley service. Brenda Parham wrote that bus service is important to the disabled community. Judith Kapauscinski said the cuts placed an unfair burden on the elderly and the disabled.**



Rodgers stated that nursing home and hospital workers need buses seven days a week, including nights. Darius Braddox said businesses on Jefferson Boulevard have flourished with the bus service available on Rte. 8 (Jefferson Boulevard). Twenty-five (25) people submitted a petition opposing the elimination of Rte. 8. Mark Luciano and Carolyn Swift stated that the working poor depend on the buses. Swift said of one worker that without job transportation, that person would go on welfare. Annette Esteves of the Providence Center said people need the buses to become independent. Joe Buchanan, a Rte. 20 rider, said service needed to be added not cut. Karen Coffey wrote that she relies on the buses to get to her job and Tania Parham wrote she depends on weekend service to get to work.

Several people, including Gerald Palmer, Diane Patry, Joanne Mansoff, Linda Dubois, David Cook, and George Banks spoke about how critical Rte. 9 (Pascoag/Wallum Lake) is to residents of the area, taking them to Zambarano Hospital, work, the pharmacy, grocery store, etc. Patry said 40,000 people in the area would be stranded without service. One hundred and forty-six (146) people submitted a petition opposing service cuts in Foster, Glocester, Burrillville and Scituate (Rtes. 9 & 10).

Bruce Norton said Bryant College students will suffer if they lose Rte. 52 (Branch Avenue). Alfred Sarno, Jr. said he needs Rte. 76 (Central Avenue) to reach his doctor appointments and also opposed

**eliminating evening, weekend and Saturday service.**

**A written “pre-notice of legal action against the State of Rhode Island” was submitted by (Herc) Robert concerning the provision of adequate transportation across the state and the preservation of all routes and services.**

**Regarding Providence trolley service, several people offered comments. Representative Slater and Alfred Sarno, Jr. stated it should not be cut. Marjorie Rogers said the elderly use it for shopping 7 days a week and both Carolyn Swift and Chuck Blake said the trolleys link neighborhoods. Mark Rechten stated they were not a service duplication.**

**With respect to funding, several people offered comments.**

**Richard Bidwell, representing the Grey Panthers, stated that an additional funding source must be found. Grant Dulgarian stated the budget shortfall should be covered by the State’s annual supplemental budget; he noted that Providence benefits from but does not provide support for transit. James Celenza, representing the RI Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, suggested that 1) city organizations and companies, which benefit from the trolleys, fund them and 2) out-of-state college students pay a fee that would be appropriated for transit in exchange for a transit pass. Mr.Celenza said RIDOT should kick in to cover RIPTA’ s deficit this year.**

**John Gallagher said more state funds are needed. John Morris said the federal government should provide more funding. Mark Luciano said cars driving into downtown Providence should be taxed. Chuck Blake suggested the RI Tourism Council give RIPTA money. Daniel Daley suggested a cigarette and liquor tax transit fund. Joe Buchanan suggested RIPTA ask businesses for funding; Robert Kane said there's no reason the State can't fund RIPTA.**

## **Public Hearing**

**Barrington Public Library**

**Wednesday, September 8, 2004**

**12 pm—2 pm**

**Twenty-one (21) people including one (1) public official attended the afternoon hearing. Thirteen (13) made oral comments and two (2) provided written comments. Representative Susan Story attended. Tom Cute , Vice-president of ATU 618, attended.**

**The negative impact of cuts on RIde paratransit service was a major theme.**

**Representative Susan Story expressed concern about reductions in RIde service. Paula Bradley, representing Congressman Patrick Kennedy, stated her concern about RIde service and Rte. 9. Barry**

**Humphries, who is blind, said he uses RIde for 95% of his transportation. Angelina Teixeira, who is visually impaired, expressed her concern about ADA service cuts and said cuts would limit her search for employment.**

**Richard Gaffney, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island, wrote that people need the service to travel to work and to the doctor; he said if he has no bus service, he will be forced to move. Gaffney stressed the importance of ADA service and its connection to fixed-route service. Mary Jane Fry stated RIde is her only means of transportation; she uses it for doctor visits. Fray also said many elderly people use RIPTA for shopping. John Carvalo, a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island, said he uses RIde for doctor visits and errands.**

**Joy Dennis, a disabled senior from West Barrington, said she uses ADA service to travel to medical appointments and to computer training in Warwick; she stated bus service enables her to maintain independence. Dennis said service should be streamlined, cuts limited and suggested cutting weekend service. She wrote that RIde and other service cuts should not be implemented. Gracie Grout said paratransit service cuts would threaten her independence and that her trips to church meetings and to the YMCA for exercise would stop; she stated she could manage with just weekday paratransit service.**

**Additionally, Naomi Hersfeld stated she has used RIPTA for 25 years and cannot afford to drive and park downtown; she said Rhode Island is funding people to drive cars, not supporting mass transit. Tom Padwa objected to RIPTA making blanket cuts. Sheila Dobbyn, representing the East Bay Mental Health Center, said cutting Rte. 32 (West Barrington) would impact all of her clients. Dobbyn stated some rely on the #32 for job transportation and that people without cars would be left without options.**

## **Public Hearing**

**Barrington Public Library**

**Wednesday, September 8, 2004**

**6 pm—8 pm**

**Twenty-five (25) people, including one (1) public official, attended the evening hearing. Nineteen (19) offered oral comments, four (4) provided written comments. Senator David Bates attended.**

**Senator David Bates said he hopes current service will be maintained and suggested RIPTA consider tiered rates.**

**Seven people commented on the importance of service for people who are disabled. Megan Reynolds, a 15-year old with Down syndrome, said the bus provides her with independence. Renee Doran, Megan's mother, said removal of service reduces opportunity and that her daughter needs the bus to become a productive member**

of society. Lynn Coughlin stated she uses the bus because of her medical condition and that many people use transit because they cannot afford cars. Service, she said, should be reduced where lines are not used. Patrick Tengwall stated that he and his disabled spouse bought a house based on proximity to the bus route. He said that RIPTA is a lifeline and is needed for economic development. Beth Tengwall said the bus is her only means of transportation and she would be willing to pay more. Joanne Pezzullo wrote that service cuts would hurt the handicapped.

Bob Coffey, representing the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC), wrote that ATAC is concerned about transit for the disabled and the elderly who depend on it for medical appointments, work, shopping and school. He emphasized that many would be homebound without RIde.

Renee Doran suggested the number of people, who are dependent on the RIde Program, could be reduced by shifting them to the fixed-route system in order to reduce costs.

Other attendees commented on the importance of RIPTA as a provider of job transportation.

Patrick Tengwall said he looks for jobs that can be reached by transit.

Mark Laroche stated he bought his home on Willet Avenue in order to use Rte. 32 service to reach his small business in Providence; he

said he'd be willing to pay more for service. Harriet Downy said she also bought a house on Rte. 32 and her husband depends on the bus for his transportation. John Roberts said he needs the bus system to find and to travel to work. Ken Perlow said in oral and written commentary that he uses RIPTA to go to work and bought his house on a bus line partially for that reason. Laurie Miskimins wrote to oppose the elimination of weekend and holiday service because it would harm the underemployed.

Mary Vanellie and Kenneth Perlow suggested RIPTA use smaller buses. John Roberts stated RIPTA should consider cutting staff and salaries and Ken Bryant stated RIPTA should look for more riders.

Frederick Rounds said a statewide transit system is important for the Rhode Island economy and the State's tourism industry. He said government subsidy should be a priority. Ken Bryant said RIPTA's mission needs to include all towns in the State. Ann Connor said the gas tax should be raised to fund transit and praised the trolleys.

**Public Hearing**

**Warwick City Hall**

**Wednesday, September 8, 2004**

**12 pm —2 pm**

**Sixty-five (65) people, including one (1) public official attended the**

afternoon hearing. Twenty-nine (29) offered oral comment and thirteen (13), including one (1) public official, provided written comment. Representative Eileen Naughton attended. Steve Farrell, Business Agent for ATU 618, attended.

A key theme was the hardship service cuts would inflict on people with disabilities, the elderly and people who rely on transit for job transportation.

Representative Joseph McNamara's written testimony was read into the record. The representative emphasized the following points: cuts would cause significant hardship for many and negatively impact the environment and the economic opportunities available to Rhode Islanders; an estimated 50% of RIPTA riders use the bus to get to work; cutbacks will discourage use and adversely affect seniors and people with disabilities in disproportionate numbers; Rhode Island should strengthen transit with funding adequate for expansion; and the State should properly fund transportation, not cut services. He stated that he has sponsored legislation to establish a Blue Ribbon Commission to study transit in Rhode Island and is hoping a multi-year financial plan for an intermodal transit system will be developed.

Representative Eileen Naughton said the entire transcripts of all hearings should be required reading for board members.



**Mary Madden, CEO of the Trudeau Center, opposed fixed-route and Ride cuts because people with developmental disabilities will lose their job transportation, independence and income. Cheryl Ann Ring, a Trudeau Center employee in written testimony stated that over 100 Center clients who depend on bus and paratransit service are valuable employees and volunteers in the community. Without transit, she said these individuals would lose their jobs, income and independence.**

**Four (4) employees of the Ocean State Center for Independent Living, an organization that serves people with disabilities, spoke against service cuts. Lorna Ricci, Executive Director of the Center, opposed all cuts, including Routes 3 (Warwick Avenue) and 29 (Kent County), said the bus provides autonomy for those who don't drive. Jeanne Fay said cuts will prevent the disabled from working and contributing to society. Bonnie Abols stated that people rely on the bus and asked that no cuts be made. Hal Fayerweather said consumers with disabilities need Routes 8 (Jefferson Boulevard) and 29 to travel to educational and job opportunities as well as to medical offices, INSIGHT and TechAccess.**

**Colleen McCarthy, a Sargent Rehabilitation Center employee, spoke and provided written testimony. She said eliminating Rte. 29 would be devastating for the people the Center serves whose average age is 40. The Sargent Center, she said, is the only neurological day treatment program in Rhode Island for people who've experienced**

stroke or traumatic brain injury. McCarthy said 96% of the people Sargent serves require Ride service and 68% return to work. Karlton Bontrager said and wrote that due to traumatic brain injury, Ride service is a lifeline for him and access to the Sargent Center is vital for him to be able to return to college and go to work.

Brian Walling, Kent Hospital Marketing and Public Relations Director, spoke and provided written testimony. He stated his opposition to eliminating Rte. 29 and associated ADA service. He said only Rte. 29 serves the hospital and that access to the hospital is vital for the community. Access between the hospital and CCRI's Knight Campus is necessary for students in a new educational nursing program, he said.

David Lauterback representing the Kent Center, a mental health center, spoke and provided written testimony. The MHRH requires the Kent Center to have locations with transit access and many clients rely on transit to get to the Center's locations on Tollgate Road and Centerville Road, he said. He stated that transit is an essential service, a lifeline, allowing people to access needed services and participate in the community.

Roberta Merkle representing Cornerstone stated that cuts would affect those most in need, including frail elderly and adults with disabilities. She said cuts would also impact family members, who would not be able work and care for relatives who lose transportation

to necessary programs.

Elizabeth Bode, an employee of Bridges, Inc., an organization for the disabled, wrote that RIPTA is vital for disabled people who cannot drive and urged retention of Rte. 64 (Newport/URI) and Sunday service on Rte. 30 (Arlington/Oaklawn).

Helen Ripa representing the Elizabeth Buffum Chance Center said Routes 3 and 29 are vital links to services and should be saved. She added that her father had to give up his license and Rte. 29 is now his transportation.

Jeanne Gattegno representing West Bay Community Action said the impact of cuts would be felt by the most economically fragile and prevent people from achieving economic self-sufficiency. She stated that people needed to travel to her organization for services, job training, childcare and a new health center.

Debbie Hooper wrote that she is legally blind and depends on RIDE for doctors appointments, school, INSIGHT services and work, adding that without transportation she'll lose her ability to function. Bill Hooper, her spouse, said he works in Connecticut, can't drive his wife around everyday and asked why RIPTA wants to take mobility away from the handicapped.

Cheryl Armstrong wrote that she is disabled mother of two children,

cannot afford a car, and depends on Rte. 29. She also stated that the bus is the family's only means of transportation. Anne Killay wrote that she is disabled, uses Rte. 29 and requests that it not be cut.

Mark Susa, who is disabled, said and wrote that people with disabilities rely on transit to work, shop, and be independent. He urged support for RIPTA and urged disabled people to use more fixed-route service than RIde.

Almas Kalafian stated she has relied on transit her entire life due to a vision impairment and began using RIde a few years ago when she lost her remaining vision. She stated she is willing to pay higher taxes for transportation, urged support for RIPTA and RIde, and asked that no cuts be made. Debby Hooper wrote that she is legally blind and depends on RIde for doctors appointments, school, service and work.

Marie Perna said public transit is an important part of accessibility in Rhode Island and noted that the AccessibleRI guide devotes two pages to transit because it's important to everyone in the State.

Other attendees spoke about their reliance on transit. Aime Bureau said she will lose her job if Rte. 29 is eliminated. James Angew said Rte. 29 is a lifeline and that if Rte. 3 loses Saturday service, he'll have difficulty getting to work in Providence. Theresa Boucher stated she relies on Rte. 29 for all her transportation and asked that it not be cut.

**Additionally, Edward Soares said bus cuts are a mistake and that he'd be stranded if Rte. 30 is cut. Debra Brynes, Kate Soulliere and Marie Pareanty said they rely on Rte. 29. Lillian DeAngelo stated she uses the bus to reach INSIGHT (Rte. 8) and the North Kingstown Senior Center. Patricia Manning urged that Saturday service on Rte. 12 be kept and also said she was opposed to having the government involved in providing transportation; she suggested public transit be privatized.**

**Steve Farrell, ATU Business Agent, stated that RIPTA has been expanding much-needed service and should not go backwards and cut service. He said maintenance as well as driver and mechanics training is the best it has been in his 28 years of transit in Rhode Island.**

**Bill Kennedy said that he understands that working people, the disabled and the elderly rely on RIPTA and that the State needs to change the funding system or we'll be doing this again next year.**

**Public Hearing**

**Warwick City Hall**

**Wednesday, September 8, 2004**

**6 pm —8 pm**

**Forty-one (41) people attended the evening hearing. No public officials were present. Steve Farrell, Business Agent for ATU 618, attended. Ten (10) people offered oral comments. One of them also provided comment in writing. There were no other written comments.**

**Several comments focused on the hardship service cuts would impose on the elderly, people with disabilities, and people who rely on transit for job transportation.**

**Nick Schmader said that Rhode Island's elderly population is already one of the largest proportionally in the nation and it will increase greatly in the next decade and require transit service. He said the proposed cuts, making service less available and convenient, will decrease ridership and lead to additional cuts. Judy Smith, INSIGHT President, stated elderly people, many of whom are visually impaired need ADA service and called the proposed cuts "discriminatory". She suggested that the Providence LINK be cut instead of vital service. Linda Furney said on behalf of her disabled son that he is gaining independence with transit. She stated that the numbers of people with disabilities and the elderly are increasing.**

**Kathleen Podgurski, ATAC member, stated she will lose her ADA**

service and be unable to go anywhere, including to her medical appointments, if cuts are implemented. She said transit service to many of Kent County's medical services would be lost under the proposed cuts. Anne McDonald urged RIPTA to consider the social impacts of service cuts, especially on the disabled, elderly and others. She said if service is cut it shouldn't happen in the coldest month of the year.

Kathleen Wood said she can't afford a car, depends on the bus to get to work and to provide for her son. Anne McDonald said without Rte. 8 she will have no way to get to work. She urged RIPTA to look at the social impact of cuts, particularly on the elderly, disabled and others. Melissa Fundakuski asked that her Kent County bus service be preserved and said she and others had no other way to get around. She asked RIPTA to consider the impact of cuts on individuals and on the whole community.

Cedric Cushing requested that Rte. 29 and holiday service not be cut.

Steve Farrell, ATU Business Agent, reiterated comments he made during the afternoon hearing.

Regarding the Providence LINK trolleys, Judy Smith suggested they be cut instead of vital service. Laurie Furney asked why not cut trolleys overall and save routes?

With respect to funding, there were a few comments. Judy Smith, the INSIGHT President, suggested the State fund transit appropriately. Kathleen Podgurski, ATAC member, said people should call their legislators and ask them to find the money to support transit. Nick Schmader expressed opposition to airport runway expansion, saying the State should fund in-state transit needs first. Anne McDonald stated that the Governor and General Assembly should increase funding.

Several members of the public asked questions ranging from how ADA worked through trip frequency to federal funding and other topics. For the questions and the answers, please see transcripts and/or attached notes.

**Public Hearing**

**Newport City Hall**

**Thursday, September 9 , 2004**

**12 pm —2 pm**

Forty-six (46) people, including three (3) members of the public attended the afternoon hearing. Public officials attending were Senator Theresa Paiva Weed, Representative Bruce Long and Representative Maxine Shavers. Twenty (20) made oral comments and one (1) provided written comment.



**A major theme was the impact of cuts on the most vulnerable area residents.**

**Senator Paiva Weed said she is concerned about the costs that will be incurred if transit service is cut and said public housing residents, especially the elderly and disabled, would lose access to jobs, school and social activities. She stated her support for maintaining transit services, especially Rte. 64 (Newport/URI). Representative Long stated the people who will suffer from cuts are the most vulnerable members of the community and stated his support for Rte. 64. Rep. Long stated that RIPTA has improved more than most state agencies in the last five years and is doing a good job.**

**Coffee Bell, Vice President of the Statewide Independent Living Council, expressed concern that elderly, low income and disabled people would be most affected by cuts. Bell said Jamestown has many disabled residents but no cab service and eliminating Rte. 64 will eliminate ADA service in Jamestown and also cut access to jobs for people who use #64.**

**Cynthia Hamilton, a wheelchair-dependent Newport resident who works at URI, stated it is important for disabled people to support public transit and Elizabeth Hoffnagle, a disabled rider, said she needs transit to get around. Another disabled Newport resident, Annette Bourbonniere, stated her opposition to all service cuts.**

**The Executive Director of the Newport Housing Authority, Jim Reed, said transit is vital to residents of 100 affordable housing units. George Levesque, candidate for office and manager for a paratransit provider, expressed concern that cutting Rte. 64 would hurt low income people.**

**Jim Anderson of Jamestown said he relies on transit to travel to rehab services and the grocery store. Anne Sherman, a daily rider with failing vision, stated that cutting Rte. 64 would prevent people from getting around; she said she is willing to pay more for bus service. Lily Hudfield stated Rte. 64, which she rides from Jamestown to Wakefield and Newport, is important for her. Yvonne Virgadamo, a mother, student and bus rider, expressed concern that a lack of holiday service will prevent people from going to work; she said she can't afford a car.**

**Edward N. Day, Jr., a Jamestown senior, expressed his concern that a large number of seniors who ride the bus would be disadvantaged if Rte. 64 is cut. Elaine Spillane of Middletown said she takes Rte. 64 to reach URI in order to save money and opposes all service cuts.**

**Gene Parsons, Anthony Shaw and Brian Stevens, all residents of the Bristol Veterans Home, said they rely on RIPTA for transportation. David Brown said he supports equitable access to transportation, which benefits affordable housing, healthcare, and the environment. Brown suggested RIPTA look for alternatives and options for**

**passengers who lose service.**

**Barry Schiller of the Sierra Club said transit service needed to be saved for those who don't drive. He stated that transit improves the environment and helps prevent sprawl.**

**Ned Draper, Director of Newport Administrative Services, reported that RIPTA service reduces congestion on the city's streets. He also praised RIPTA's partnership with Newport during Tall Ships for helping 25% of the visitors to enter the city via public transportation.**

**R.L. Hollis said that the State should be able to find enough money to fund RIPTA.**

### **Special Meeting**

**Newport Police Station**

**Thursday, September 9 , 2004**

**2 pm—3 pm**

**This special meeting was held to accommodate some disabled individuals who requested a different venue than the ADA accessible Newport City Hall. Six (6) people , including one public official, attended. Six (6) offered oral comments. There were no written comments.**

**Senator June Gibbs, Annette Bourboniere, Manspuld Lyon, Stephen**

**Pratt, Mrs. Frecette and Jacquelyn Dubell attended. Mr. Pratt stated that he and his mother use Ride in Newport. Ms. Bourboniere said that while she believed in transit , RIPTA needs to overhaul the transit system and asked RIPTA to look for new types of vehicles. Senator Gibbs wanted to know if RIPTA could buy hybrid buses and Manspuld Lyon inquired about electric buses and asked if the gas tax could be increased. Mrs. Frecette said the ¾ mile ADA corridor posed problems for some ; she stated that many seniors could afford to pay more for their transit services and suggested charging seniors over a certain income level. Ms. Dubell asked about hybrid and LNG.**

## **Public Hearing**

**Newport City Hall**

**Thursday, September 9 , 2004**

**6 pm —8 pm**

**Forty-one (41) people, including one (1) public official attended the evening hearing. Thirteen (13) offered oral comments, four (4) provided written comments. Representative Paul Crowley attended.**

**The key theme was the importance of retaining Route 64 (Newport/URI) so that residents in Newport and Jamestown can get to their jobs, medical appointments, and school and the disabled could retain the associated ADA Ride service.**

**Representative Paul Crowley implored RIPTA's board to defer any service cuts until the legislature is back in session. He stated his support for transit serving Newport and observed that it has turned around for the better.**

**Alexandra LaPlant representing the Rhode Island Disability Law Center wrote that cuts would negatively impact people with disabilities, creating additional barriers to employment, education and healthcare. She stated that decreased access would produce monetary and social costs. Emily Titon, a disabled Jamestown resident, wrote that she relies on RIPTA to get to work, visit her doctor, etc. In a written comment, Yvonne Virgadamo expressed concern for the impact of cuts on the disabled, poor and elderly and Susan Long and Lisa Sanders stressed the significance of Ride. Peter Ritchie, Newport resident and RIPTA employee, submitted a Newport Daily News editorial "RIPTA cuts would cause real hardship" and stated the cuts would affect the neediest people in the state.**

**Skye Stone and Ritchie said cutting Rte. 64 would isolate Jamestown; Susan Long said the #64 is important to reach jobs and shopping in Jamestown.**

Stone also said she needs Rte. 64 to get to work. Michael Lopes stated his opposition to cutting Rte. 64, which he uses to go work at Quonset/ Davisville. Gina Bangs said cutting evening service would result in job losses for people with no other transportation. Vigadamo objected to cutting holiday service because of its impact on people who must work on holidays.

Carol Morris explained that people in the Child and Family Services program attending URI would no longer be able to reach Kingston without the #64. Lisa Adams, a student who relies on the bus to URI, urged “don’t cut us out”. Vigadamo, supporting retention of #64, said she rides the bus daily to higher education and to church and that there needs to be a long-term funding solution for RIPTA. RIPTA . Bangs expressed her concern about retaining the #64 to reach URI.

Sanders said she can’t afford a car and depends on the bus. Steven C. Aten stated his opposition to cuts in Newport and said transit provides affordable transportation, reduces congestion and pollution; he said RIPTA should plan for increased service.

Judy Steven inquired about reducing CMAQ projects to lower the local match and employees paying a portion of health care costs to cut RIPTA costs.

**Community Meeting**

## **Burrillville High School**

**Wednesday, September 15, 2004**

**6 pm – 8 pm**

**Fifty-three (53) people, including nine (9) public officials, attended. Public officials attending included Senator Paul Fogarty, Representative Carol A. Mumford, Burrillville Town Manager Michael Wood and Town Council members Ron Faford, Bill Andrews, Ed Bonczek, William E. Gonyea, Peter Ruggieri and Charles Poirier. Twenty-five (25) people spoke and three (3) people provided written comments.**

**The overriding theme was that the proposal to eliminate all service in the Burrillville/Foster/Glocester/Scituate area of Rhode Island was unfair, wrong and would strand thousands of people, including people who commute to work by transit, the elderly and disabled residents who need the crucial services provided by Zamabarano Hospital.**

**Senator Paul Fogarty said northwest Rhode Island is the area of the state that would be most affected by service cuts and that the loss of the existing minimum transit for the area would be wrong, isolating commuters, students and disabled people. He stated that without service in the area, RIPTA would no longer be a statewide system and that the Senate will seek a solution.**

**Burrillville Town Manager Michael Wood said the proposed cuts are not acceptable and the town would fight them. He emphasized the significance of transit for Zambarano residents and stated that once service is cut it will not be restored. Wood expressed interest in working with RIPTA to save Rte. 9.**

**Linda Valianti, representing the Providence Center services at Zambarano Hospital, said without RIPTA service, Zambarano would be the only major health center in Rhode Island without transit. She explained the importance of transit for Zambarano residents who, she said, need the bus to go to work and to appointments. Frank Beasley, a Zambarano resident, spoke on behalf of other residents, says the buses make it possible for residents to go to work, classes and participate in volunteer activities. He said bus service is the backbone of their quality of life.**

**Robert Smoot, a paralyzed Zambarano resident, said he attends CCRI via RIde service, maintains a 4.0 average and thinks there should be a way to keep service to Zambarano.**

**William Feole, a disabled Zambarano resident, wrote that for the disabled RIPTA provides the opportunity to go to work, participate in the community, volunteer, attend school, shop, pay visits and be productive members of society. He asked on behalf of all the people who use RIde and fixed route that cuts be reconsidered and that people at RIPTA “put yourself in our shoes.”**



**Meredyth Waterman, speaking on behalf of her disabled brother, said the bus makes it possible for him to be independent and go to work. She said her area needs transit because distances between places are too far to walk. Waterman stated that since the Providence trolleys serve tourists, the tourism industry should contribute to their cost.**

**Representative Carol Mumford, a Finance Committee member, said despite Rte. 10's low ridership, it is significant for seniors who stay in their homes and for people in affordable housing. She stated that an aging population needs additional service.**

**Charles Poirier, Glocester Town Council member, said more transit is needed for seniors staying in their homes, for affordable housing and for transportation to Wallum Lake Hospital. He said he favors cutting trolley service.**

**The Glocester Senior Association submitted a statement opposing the elimination of bus service in northern Rhode Island.**

**With respect to the role played by RIPTA in providing job transportation and transit for commuters, many people made comments.**

**Madeleine M. Ryan said cuts would be intolerable and hinder workers traveling to jobs at Zambarano and area nursing homes. She stated her opposition to the cost of the proposed train stations south of Providence at a time where there isn't enough money to fund transit in Rhode Island. Peter Ruggieri, Glocester Town Council member, said parking is expensive and hard to find in Providence and forcing people to commute there by car has a negative impact on their income.**

**Jackie Giard, a Rte. 9 commuter, said it would cost her \$6,000 annually to commute by car and park in she loses her bus service. She expressed concern about the difficulty of commuting by car in winter and the impact on the environment of more people commuting by car. Renee McLeish, another Rte. 9 commuter, expressed concern about the costs of parking if she loses her bus, and asked about funding from sources other than the gas tax, increasing fares and reducing rather than eliminating service.**

**Joanne Mansoff, a Rte. 9 commuter, said she couldn't afford the expense of driving and suggested reducing the number trips, increasing the fare and reducing major capital spending at RIPTA. Diane Patry, a Rte. 9 commuter, said it's too expensive to park in Providence. She expressed concern that while RIPTA has spent money elsewhere in the system, it hasn't improved #9. Patry asked if service could be reduced rather than eliminated and fare zones**

re-established. Denise Simpson, a Rte. 9 rider, said she counted 21 to 28 riders on the bus, that cutting the trolle , reducing Flex service and RIPTA employees contributing to health insurance would produce savings. Rte. 9 commuter Betty Mancucci suggested cutting all trips except the first and last two of the day and said she'd be willing to pay more. Yvonne Fitz said it's expensive to park in Providence and having to drive would increase gas use. She said people are not statistics.

Carl Anderberg said there must be a way to keep Rte. 9. Chuck Mainville, a Rte. 9 rider, said Burrillville can't afford to lose more services. Kevin Blais, candidate for Burrillville Town council, stated the town is already disadvantaged with the high cost of service and transit needs to be maintained because it contributes to quality of life.

John C. Gregory, President/CEO of the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, stated that with growth coming to Burrillville, people need transit to reach jobs in Burrillville. He said it was more important to serve state residents than tourists and that RIPTA must not become an urban-based system. He stated that public transit is part of the fabric of the state, not a luxury item.

Douglas Drexel, a LaSalle student, said he takes the bus to school since his parents work. Denise Ricard said when she lived in

**Cranston there were bus choices, but now that she lives in Chepachet, there's only one choice.**

**Allison Rich, a Rte. 9 rider, said no transit service was taxation without representation since she would have to pay gas taxes but receive no service. She stated that removal of service would have a major impact on people without cars.**

### **Community Meeting**

**Providence – International Institute**

**Thursday, September 16, 2004**

**5 pm – 7 pm**

**Thirteen (13) people attended and (5) public officials. Public officials present included Senator Juan Pichardo, Representative A.P. Williams, Representative Tom Slater, Representative Elect Grace Diaz and Senator Daniel Connors. RIPTA Board Member Sharon Conard-Wells attended. Ten (10) people offered oral comments. No written comments were received.**

**A few people spoke about the need to retain bus service, a few offered suggestions and some had questions about RIPTA, its expenses and its operations.**

**Representative Tom Slater stated that he had requested that the**

**House Finance Chair meet with RIPTA.**

**Senator Juan Pichardo suggested RIPTA use alternate fuel sources and smaller buses. He expressed disappointment in the outreach for the meeting.**

**Representative A.P. Williams expressed concern about the impact on the community, especially seniors of lost service. She questioned RIPTA employee raises, new supervisor vehicles and the McKendall property purchase. She criticized the late notice of the meeting and suggested it would have been better to hold it later at night.**

**Representative-Elect Grace Diaz said she opposes the cuts and wants to learn more about RIPTA.**

**Senator Daniel Connors, RIPTA board member, said RIPTA had improved service and made other improvements in the last few years and responded to questions regarding the McKendall property, new vehicles and administration. He said RIPTA would like to do the maintenance on DOT's vehicles to increase revenue. Connors said the RIPTA fleet is aging, but fleet performance is increasing.**

**Nicki Sahlin, Executive Director of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), said thousands of Rhode Islanders with mental illness don't drive due to economic or mental health reasons. She complimented RIPTA for running what seems to be a "tighter ship"**

than other state agencies and said Rhode Island needs more bus service, not less. She stated that the first thing the community mental health centers do in job training is teach people to use the bus. She said that Blue Cross Blue Shield has stated that there isn't a problem with distribution of services throughout the state because people can take the bus to Providence. She urged that night and holiday service be kept because it is important for work, socializing and integration into the community. She brought out the link between affordable housing, housing choice, and access to transit. She said she believes that RIPTA needs more than one state funding stream, and one that keeps pace with inflation.

Elaine Waite said she takes the bus to go for cancer treatments at Rhode Island Hospital. She said she wants Route #12 and the trolleys to be kept, and the system to be maintained. She stated that the buses are overcrowded, and that she has missed appointments because the bus is too crowded and can't stop to pick her up.

Bill Bateman stated that transit is critical, fills a basic need, reduces reliance on petroleum and benefits the environment. He said it was necessary for working people and people with disabilities and that the Authority should receive funding to provide the necessary service.

Ariel Cooper stated that he has lived in Elmwood since 1968 and relies on the bus. He said he chose where to live and work based on

available transit. He asked about service for the homeless and disabled. He believes there should be more subsidies for riders like them. He spoke against the proposal to cut Route #20 on Saturdays, and asked that routes be trimmed but not eliminated. He suggested using a small bus on Route #40.

Robert Parkham, Jr. asked how often RIPTA speaks to other transit systems to get new ideas.